

# A Czech Missionary of the 18th Century as Author of a Tamil Grammar

KAMIL ZVELEBIL, Ph.D., Prague.

When occupying himself with the investigation of C. Przikryl's *Principia linguae Brahmanicae*<sup>1</sup>, the editor of the *Principia*, Dr. Pavel Poucha, one of the leading Oriental scholars of the Oriental Institute in Prague, has found a fragmentary manuscript of a Tamil grammar by the same Carolus Przikryl S. J. This work of Przikryl has been unknown since neither Prof. V. Lesny who had treated the Ms. of Przikryl's *Principia* in an article<sup>2</sup> nor his predecesors in this matter, Martin Pelzel, the author of a short biographical sketch of Przikryl, and Josef Dobrovsky, mention the existence of this (as far as we know the fifth) work of C. Przikryl at all. Dr. P. Poucha has investigated carefully the Ms., which has been, contrary to the *Principia* (which have been rewritten at the end of the 18th Cent.), preserved only in the original, written in Przikryl's own typical small characters. Only the beginning of a Tamil vocabulary can be found on the 192nd folio of the copy of Przikryl's *Principia*, comprising 48 words in all, 27 of which are translated into Latin.

In the original Ms., the fragment of the Tamil grammar can be found on pp. 29—34 and, partly, on p. 45. This fragment comprises: (a) a list of Tamil characters with their Latin equivalents (pp. 29—31), (b) pronunciation (pp. 32—34), this chapter being, however, unfinished, (c) morphology (*De declinatione nominum*). On that

<sup>1</sup> C. Przikryl, *Principia linguae Brahmanicae*, sign. X C. 35, in the National Museum in Prague.

<sup>2</sup> V. Lesny, *Principia linguae brahmanicae von Carolus Przikryl*, Archiv Orientalni, Vol. VI (1934), No. 1, pp. 50—53.

very page, unfortunately, the fragment comes to an abrupt end and there is not a word more about Tamil in Przikryl's Ms. The fragment of Przikryl's Tamil grammar comprises thus only the three mentioned paragraphs which are, however, unfinished.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to deal with those fragments and to stress their importance in the history of Indology, since they belong to the oldest works dealing with the Tamil language. Carolus Przikryl had been working up in India not only the grammar of the Konkani dialect of Marathi (*Principia linguae Brahmanicae*), but also a grammar of Tamil. According to the view of Dr. P. Poucha who has actually found and discovered this fragment in the National Museum in Prague, this fragmentary Tamil grammar was written between 1755—1762 (when its author left India for good). It must have been composed after its author had made use of some other Tamil grammars, very probably of Beschi's *Grammatica latino-tamulica*, 1738 ,and Walther's *Observationes grammaticae quibus linguae tamulicae idioma vulgare illustratur*, 1739. It is the opinion of Dr. P. Poucha that, since the other Tamil grammars, written until his time, viz., P. Bruno's grammar( 1685), P. de la Lane's grammar (1728) and Beschi's other grammar of 1730, have been only in manuscript form, C. Przikryl very probably had been able to take as his model only the two grammars quoted above. It is difficult to guess if he had made use of Ziegenbalg's *Grammatica Damulica* which had been published in Halle (?) in 1716.

The present writer has investigated different parts of Przikryl's Ms. in some detail. It seems that the list of 48 Tamil words has been excerpted out of some text (or texts) ; this seems to be indicated by the following considerations : 1. only 26 words are translated into Latin ; 2. some of the words form groups connected according to meaning ; 3. the transcription of some words shows the

author's hesitation and is inconsequent: thus he writes *c:agam* for காகம், *cornix*, but *cai* for கை, *manus*; *ac:ham* for அச்சம், *metus*, further however, *accham*, *id.* etc.

This list of words has been used as material for the explanation of pronunciation and orthography. It is very interesting to read the description of the cacuminal and retroflex consonants in the light of our experimental phonetic investigation, cf. *— . . pronunciatur inversa retrorsum lingua usage ad interiorem palati . . ன—ut n, sed inflecta eodem ut pauli anti dictum modo lingua ; ள—ut inflexa aliquantum lingua usque ad palati medietatem, ப— similiter ut ள ,crassiore sono reflexa omnino ad interiorem palati partem lingua.*<sup>3</sup>

Przikryl treats orthography and pronunciation together in his description, which is considerably condensed, to some extent, however, not quite orderly arranged. Some passages dealing with vowels are very careful indeed, cf. பகல்— *non pronunciatur pagal, sed paguel. dies.eodem modu* ; புகழ்— *pugue.laus. அவன aven.ille . . .* And further : “ . . . . I breve ante ப adeo leniter pronunciatur, et quodammodo absorbetur quam nod adisset. Sic interminatione verborum க்கிறது cradu, கிறது gradu.”

From the paragraph dealing with *sandhi* we may see that Przikryl has distinguished between the colloquial and literary forms of Tamil, cf. p. 33 of the Ms. : . . . *hujus tamen regulae rarus est usus in lingua vulgari, inviolabilis autem in sublima.*

On p. 45 the Ms. has been continued with a paragraph on the declination of nouns. It is necessary to stress the fact that Przikryl does not simply enumerate the different suffixes of the traditional eight “cases”, but that he explains, in detail, the syntactic use of these suffixes. Let

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the data obtained after the accomplishment of experimental phonetic investigation in Svarny, Zvelebil: Some Remarks . . Ar Or. Vol. XXIII, 1955, No. 3.

us quote only one typical example: "ut மலையைக் குறித்து *intendendo montem, respectu montis; nam குறித்து gerundium est a verbo குறிக்கிறது intendere.* vel 3° simili-  
ter per accu. sativum cum gerundio கொண்டு explicate quod gerundium est verbi கொள்ளுகிறது quod etiam significat: assumere quae, phasis 3 e significat ablativum instrumenti seu medii, quo utimur in latino sermone pro accusativo cum praepositione per : ut தவத்தைக்கொண்டு கையேறினான் per penitentiam, sive a frumento poenitentiae medium, aut mediante poenitentia salvus factus est."

With this last example which, by the way, indicates also the nature of some of Przikryl's sources (*salvus factus est!*), the whole fragmentary Ms. of the Tamil grammar is brought to a definite end. Maybe, and let us hope so, that in India itself more of Przikryl's works, and, among them, possibly also some dealing with Tamil, will be found by future research.

We can conclude : the fragment of the Tamil grammar by Carolus Przikryl<sup>4</sup> is based, most probably, upon the study of some older Tamil grammars (most likely on the works of C. J. Beschi and Ch. T. Walther), but it seems, that its author has compared these data with some other material obtained perhaps through the study of some texts or personal contact.

Even if this fragmentary manuscript is, perhaps, not an attempt to compose a new and original Tamil grammar, it is necessary to stress the keen interest of its author in a neo-Indian living language, in Tamil ; this interest has taken a definite and remarkable shape in Przikryl's work on the Konkani dialect of Marathi.

<sup>4</sup> Carolus Przikryl, born 7-12-1718 in Prague in 1734 joined the Jesuit Order, since 1784 in India (as Director of the Studies at the Archbishop's Seminary in Goa), later imprisoned in Portugal, since 1768 in Bohemia, died in 1785 as the rector of the Bishop's Seminary in Hradec Kralove.